

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, PLOS, EFIS, GY, NS
SUBJECT: GUYANESE PRESS COVERAGE OF INCIDENTS IN THE
CORENTYNE RIVER

REF: GEORGETOWN 0387

1. IN A LEAD ARTICLE IN ITS MARCH 24 ISSUE, THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED GUYANA CHRONICLE REPORTS THAT A SIX MAN TEAM OF GUYANESE FOREST WORKERS WERE ARRESTED AT GUNPOINT BY SURINAM SOLDIERS AND HELD FOR TWO WEEKS IN PARAMARIBO. THE CHRONICLE QUOTES THE LEADER OF THE GROUP AS SAYING THAT THE TEAM WAS CAPTURED BY THE SURINAMERS ON MARCH 4 DURING AN EXPEDITION TO OBTAIN BALATA SAP ON THE GUYANESE SIDE OF THE CORENTYNE RIVER. (THE ENTIRE RIVER, UP TO THE HIGH WATER MARK ON THE WEST BANK, IS SURINAM TERRITORY.) THE GUYANESE WORKERS WERE USING THE RIVER TO TRANSIT FROM ONE GUYANESE GROVE TO ANOTHER WHEN THEY WERE APPREHENDED BY THE SOLDIERS. THE GUYANESE PRODUCED A LETTER FROM THE GOG-
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OWNED FOREST PRODUCTS COMPANY WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE GUYANESE, WAS IGNORED BY THE SURINAMERS, THOUGH THEY CONFISCATED IT. THE GUYANESE ALLEGED THAT THEY WERE TAKEN TO A SURINAM OUTPOST WHERE THEY WERE ROUGHLY HANDLED, BOUND HAND AND FOOT AND FLOWN TO PARAMARIBO. ON ARRIVAL THE SURINAMERS ASKED IF THEY WERE GUYANA DEFENSE FORCE (GDF) PERSONNEL. ACCORDING TO THEIR LEADER, THE

GROUP DENIED THIS BUT THE SURINAMERS INSISTED THAT THEY WERE GDF SPIES. THE TEAM RECEIVED 13 DAY JAIL SENTENCES WHICH THEY SERVED IN PARAMARIBO. AFTER BEING HELD AN ADDITIONAL NIGHT IN THE NICKERIE JAIL, THEY WERE PLACED IN A LAUNCH AND RETURNED ACROSS THE RIVER TO GUYANA.

2. TWO OTHER INCIDENTS ON THE CORENTYNE RIVER WERE DISCUSSED IN THE SAME ARTICLE. IN MID-MARCH A FISHING BOAT AND ITS FOUR MAN CREW WERE SEIZED BY A SURINAM GUNBOAT. THE MEN WERE REPORTEDLY DETAINED IN JAIL AND THE BROTHER OF ONE OF THEM STATED THAT HE WAS DENIED PERMISSION TO SEE THE GROUP. ON MARCH 22 A SURINAMESE GUNBOAT CHASED FOUR GUYANESE BOATS FISHING IN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN OFF THE CORENTYNE COAST. THREE OF THE BOATS WERE ABLE TO MAKE GUYANESE COASTAL WATERS BUT ONE WAS CAPTURED BY THE SPEED-BOAT DISPATCHED FROM THE GUNBOAT. THE EIGHT CREWMEN ARE SAID TO BE IN JAIL IN SURINAM.

3. IN RESPONSE TO THESE INCIDENTS, THE TWO LARGEST FISHING COOPERATIVES IN THE CORENTYNE AREA HAVE VOTED TO HALT THEIR FISHING ACTIVITIES, URGE THE GOG TO AID THE IMPRISONED FISHERMEN, AND BEGIN PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS ON BEHALF OF THEIR COLLEAGUES.

4. COMMENT: THE CHRONICLE ARTICLE IS WRITTEN IN A STYLE DESIGNED TO APPEAL TO THE NATIONALISTIC SENTIMENTS
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OF THE GUYANESE. THERE HAS BEEN NO DISCERNIBLE MOVEMENT ON THE PART OF THE GOG TO SEEK A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE CORENTYNE PROBLEMS SINCE THE RESIGNATION OF FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER FRED WILLS IN MID-FEBRUARY. HOWEVER, THE NEW FONMIN RASHLEIGH JACKSON RETURNED TO GUYANA EARLY, ON MARCH 24; WITH HIS RETURN THE MATTER MAY RPT MAY RECEIVE THE HIGH LEVEL ATTENTION IT DESERVES.
BURKE

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